



Lenin, shortly after the Revolution

The State

This part of our course on “The State and Revolution” comprises of Lenin’s lecture, “[The State](#)” (download linked below). This lecture was given in July, 1919, two years after the writing of “The State and Revolution”, and less than two years after the Great October 1917 revolution. It can help us to revise quickly the main considerations of the State and what that thing really is, as a partial preparation for study of the earlier work, which ranges much wider.

In “[Bourgeois and Proletarians](#)”, the first section of the [Communist Manifesto](#), Karl Marx wrote:

“The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”

In other words: The modern State is the executive committee of the ruling bourgeois class, of which there is not, and cannot be, any other such ruling executive committee or totalising authority.

The State manifests itself in many ways. Not only is it Legislature, Executive and Judiciary, but it also includes the “Special Bodies of Armed Men” (police, intelligence and military), the “sovereign document” of the Constitution, the State Owned Enterprises, and the “Delivery” departments like Education, Health, Public Works; and others.

Concerning the state, in his speech to the COSATU Central Committee on 28 July 2011, SACP General Secretary Dr Blade Nzimande said:

“There is a distinction but very close relationship between ‘government’ and the ‘state’. Government represents the highest most concentration of the power of the state, but government does not constitute the entirety of the state. The state is made up of its executive arm (Cabinet and the bureaucracy), the legislature(s) and the judiciary, as well as other organs of state. As to who the executive arm of the state and the composition of parliament is largely

determined through electoral means, but the totality of the character and nature of the state is not principally determined by elections, but instead by the balance of class forces in broader society. It is therefore possible, as I will illustrate later in the speech, that a particular party can win elections, but at the same time its views and interests not be the dominant ones in the state. In 1994 we inherited an apartheid state apparatus, that we have not smashed entirely, and key components of the apartheid state still reflects itself in the bureaucracy, the judiciary and in various other areas of the state, not least the ideological orientation of the state organs.”

As communists we hold fast to the concept of the State as the instrument of class power that enforces and perpetuates bourgeois class dictatorship in our country. We do not believe that the State is neutral, or above class struggle. The State is the principal instrument of class struggle on behalf of the ruling bourgeois class.

We intend that there should as soon as possible be no class division and therefore that the State as we know it would become redundant and give way to social self-management, or in other words, to communism – true freedom.

Yet the term “State” is nowadays used in other, less strict senses, and we as political people who must communicate with others, do also use the word in other senses than the above. For example, we sometimes use the phrase “Developmental State”, which even if we ourselves would

qualify its meaning, is nevertheless widely understood as meaning a State that is equally beneficial to all classes (i.e. is a “win-win”, or classless, or neutral state).

We are fortunate to have the lecture that Lenin [pictured] gave to students in Moscow in 1919 on this topic, wherein Lenin asks:

“what is the state, how did it arise and fundamentally what attitude to the state should be displayed by the party of the working class, which is fighting for the complete overthrow of capitalism - the Communist Party?”

Lenin referred his audience to Engels’ [“Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”](#). This book of Engels’ sweeps through the whole human story and explains the fall of the women, as well as class struggle and the state. We will take it as our next part, and then, for the fuller treatment from Lenin, there is the extraordinary work that he produced between the two Russian revolutions of February and October, 1917: [“The State and Revolution”](#), Chapter 1 of which will be our fourth part of this course.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Lecture on The State, 1919, Lenin](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).